2007-04887/

University Education Pays Off, Minister Says

Department of Education and Culture (to July 99)
April 17, 1998 10:55

Satisfied graduates -- and more graduates working -- show that a university education pays off, Education and Culture Minister Robbie Harrison says, based on a survey of university graduates in Atlantic Canada.

The survey findings are welcome news, in addition to the strong contribution a university education makes to students' quality of life.

"In Nova Scotia, we're proud to have some of the best universities in Canada," said Mr. Harrison. "Our students know it, and the results of this survey speak for themselves.

"At the same time, we must begin to increase our investment in our universities so student satisfaction and the quality of programs remain high."

Mr. Harrison said the survey findings reinforce the need to keep the issue of student debt loads a top priority, involving universities, students and both levels of government.

Student assistance is the centrepiece of this year's recent federal budget -- helping students now through tax relief, more interest relief, incentives for youth hiring, and grants and loan relief for students in greatest need. In addition, the $2.5-billion Canada Millennium Scholarship Fund will help hundreds of thousands of students.

"We want students at the table as we continue to work with the federal government on the student debt load issue," Mr. Harrison said.

Harmonization of the federal and provincial student loan programs is another priority that will reduce paperwork and could lower monthly loan payments for students.

"Youth employment is another provincial priority," Mr. Harrison said. "We're beginning an encouraging trend -- with more students earning more money. We want that trend to continue, with increasingly significant growth."

Mr. Harrison praised the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission for producing the report, and thanked the graduates and universities for participating.

"These surveys provide a great wealth of information. They put the facts and figures -- the good news and the bad -- on the table so universities, government and students themselves can make informed decisions on post-secondary issues."

In Nova Scotia, copies of the survey are being distributed free

of charge to student leaders, universities and regional libraries.

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ngr Apr. 17, 1998 10:55 a.m.

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